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Friday, March 10 2023

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Via Dolorosa

The **Via Dolorosa** (Latin: "Way of Grief," "Way of Sorrow," "Way of Suffering" or simply "Painful Way") is a street within the Old City of Jerusalem, believed to be the path that Jesus walked on the way to his crucifixion. The traditional route starts just inside the Lions' Gate (St. Stephen's Gate) in the Muslim Quarter, at the Umariya Elementary School, near the location of the former Antonia Fortress, and makes its way westward through the Old City to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Christian Quarter. The current enumeration is partly based on a circular devotional walk, organized by the Franciscans in the 14th century; their devotional route, heading east along the Via Dolorosa (the opposite direction to the usual westward pilgrimage), began and ended at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, also passing through both Gethsemane and Mount Zion during its course.

Stephen's Gate

The **Lions' Gate** also known as *St. Stephen's Gate* is located in the Old City Walls. Known as the Lions gate in many references, it took on the name of the Stephen's gate as a testament to the stoning of Stephen at the witnessing of the Apostle Paul.

Located in the Eastern Wall, the entrance marks the beginning of the traditional Christian observance of the last walk of Jesus from prison to crucifixion, the Via Dolorosa. Near the gate's crest are four figures of leopards, often mistaken for lions, two on the left and two on the right. They were placed there by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent to celebrate the Ottoman defeat of the Mamluks in 1517. Legend has it that Suleiman's predecessor Selim I dreamed of lions that were going to eat him because of his plans to level the city. He was spared only after promising to protect the city by building a wall around it. This led to the lion becoming the heraldic symbol of Jerusalem. However, Jerusalem already had been, from Biblical times, the capital of the Kingdom of Judah, whose emblem was a lion (Genesis 49:9). In another version Suleiman taxed Jerusalem's residents with heavy taxes which they could not afford to pay. That night Suleiman had a dream of two lions coming to devour him. When he woke up, he asked his dream solvers what his dream meant. A wise respected man came forward and asked Suleiman what was on

his mind before drifting to sleep. Suleiman responded that he was thinking about how to punish all the men who didn't pay his taxes. The wise man responded that since Suleiman thought badly about the holy city, God was angry. To atone, Suleiman built the Lions' Gate to protect Jerusalem from invaders.

Bethesda Pools

The **Pool of Bethesda** is a pool of water in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem, on the path of the Beth Zeta Valley. The fifth chapter of the Gospel of John describes such a pool in Jerusalem, near the Sheep Gate, which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. It is associated with healing. Until the 19th century, there was no evidence outside of John's Gospel for the existence of this pool; therefore, scholars argued that the gospel was written later, probably by someone without first-hand knowledge of the city of Jerusalem, and that the "pool" had only a metaphorical, rather than historical, significance. In the 19th century, archaeologists discovered the remains of a pool fitting the description in John's Gospel.

The Gospel of John narrative (chapter 5) describes the porticos as being a place in which large numbers of infirm people were waiting, which corresponds well with the site's 1st century AD use as an asclepieion (Healing Temple). Some ancient biblical manuscripts argue that these people were waiting for the *troubling of the water*; a few such manuscripts also move the setting away from Roman rituals into something more appropriate to Judaism, by adding that an angel would occasionally stir the waters, which would then cure the first person to enter. The biblical narrative continues by describing a Shabbat visit to the site by Jesus, during which he heals a man who has been bedridden for many years, and could not make his own way into the pool.

St Annes Church

The **Church of Saint Anne** is a Roman Catholic church, located at the start of the Via Dolorosa, near the Lions' Gate and churches of the Flagellation and Condemnation, in the Muslim Quarter of the old city of Jerusalem. The austere stone interior and extraordinary acoustics make it a fine example of medieval architecture. Built between 1131 and 1138 to replace a previous Byzantine church, and shortly thereafter enlarged by several meters, the church is an excellent example of Romanesque architecture. The three-aisled basilica incorporates cross-vaulted ceilings and pillars, clear clean lines and a somewhat unadorned interior. The nave is separated from the lower lateral aisles by arcades of arches. The high altar, designed by the French sculptor Philippe Kaepelin incorporates many different scenes. On the front of the altar are depicted the Nativity (left), the Descent from the Cross (center) and the Annunciation (right); on the left-hand end is the teaching of Mary by her mother, on the right-hand end her presentation in the Temple. In the south aisle is a flight of steps leading down to the crypt, in a grotto believed by the Crusaders to be Mary's birthplace. An altar dedicated to Mary is located there. The Byzantine basilica was partly stretched over two water basins, collectively known as the Pools of Bethesda, and built upon a series of piers, one of which still stands today in its entirety. The church possesses amazing acoustics perfect with sounds moving across the open space and up from the grotto. This makes the church a pilgrimage site for soloists and choirs.

Lithostraphos (Gabbatha)

Gabbatha is the Aramaic name of a place in Jerusalem, that is also referred to by the Greek name of **Lithostrōtos**. It occurs only once in the Bible, in John 19:13. The Gospel of John states that Pontius Pilate: "brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat" . (NOTE: Scholars today are now certain that Pilate carried out his judgements at Herod's Palace at the southwest side of the city, rather than at this point in the city's northeast corner.)

The name "Gabbatha" is not a mere translation of "Lithostrotos", which properly means the tessellated or mosaic pavement where the judgment-seat stood, but which was extended to the place itself in front of Pilate's praetorian, where that pavement was laid. Also that "Gabbatha" is derived from a root (meaning "back", or "elevation"), which refers, not to the kind of pavement, but to the "elevation" of the place in question. It thus appears that the two names "Lithostrotos" and "Gabbatha" were due to different characteristics of the spot where Pilate condemned Jesus to death. The inference that can be gathered with certainty from John's statement is that "Gabbatha" denotes the usual place in Jerusalem, where Pilate had his judicial seat, and where he caused Jesus to be brought forth, that he might deliver, and in that of the Jewish multitude, his formal and final sentence of death by crucifixion.

Church of Holy Sepulchre

A large shrine called the Edicule stands in the center of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and marks the location that Christian tradition identifies with the tomb of Jesus Christ. The limestone tomb itself has long been closed, in part to preserve the delicate limestone, but the Edicule is open to the public. Everyday hundreds of pilgrims walk through this shrine and visit the site where Christ's body was laid. These Christians pray, light candles and kiss the altar that marks the location of Christ's tomb. While the faithful flock to the massive Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem, religious scholars and historians have long doubted that the tomb beneath the Edicule was actually used by Jesus Christ. Recent information uncovered by the National Technical University of Athens, however, has upheld the beliefs of the faithful.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre has been destroyed and rebuilt multiple times. The first church was built in the fourth century on the orders of Emperor Constantine, the first Roman emperor to practice Christianity. Around 325 AD, Constantine sent representatives to Jerusalem in search of the burial place of Jesus. The representatives were led to a pagan temple that Roman Emperor Hadrian had built in the early second century. Historical sources suggest that Hadrian had deliberately built the temple over Christ's tomb in order to show the dominance of Roman paganism over Christianity. Eusebius, the Bishop of Caesarea, wrote that Constantine had the Roman temple razed, and Christ's rock-cut tomb was revealed. Constantine had a church built over the tomb to mark the burial place of Jesus.

Constantine's church was destroyed in 614 by the Persians, but it was later rebuilt. In 966, the dome was destroyed again, and the church razed entirely by Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim in 1009. Parts of Constantine's Anastasis survived due to its sturdy construction and being submerged beneath debris. The tomb itself remained untouched only because it too was buried in the rubble of the destroyed church. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre as we know it was rebuilt by the Crusaders in the eleventh

century, and little has changed in the church since. The repeated destruction of the Holy Sepulchre, however, left historians and religious scholars with doubts that the tomb in the “newer” church was truly Christ’s burial place. Many scholars believed that the tomb only dated back to the Crusader period.

The National Technical University of Athens has recently proven that the tomb is much older than scholars believed it to be. Necessary renovations on the Edicule exposed the tomb itself for the first time in centuries and allowed researchers to date the stone of the holy site. While there is, unfortunately, currently no way to prove that the tomb was used specifically by Jesus Christ, scientific evidence does support the tradition that identifies the tomb as the burial place of Jesus.

Garden Tomb

The Garden Tomb is believed by many to be the garden and sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, and therefore a possible site of the resurrection of Jesus. The Garden Tomb is an alternative site to the famous Holy Sepulchre for you to consider the Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Garden is a beautiful place in which you will discover several things that were all here on the night Jesus died and which match the accounts in the four Gospels. We never claim to be in the right place as we could never prove that; but where Jesus died is of little importance compared with why. The Garden Tomb is a quiet place preserved for worship and reflection, with many places to sit and enjoy the surroundings and listen to groups from all over the world worship in their native tongue.

Southern Steps

Fewer places in Jerusalem give the sense of the Second Temple period like the Southern Steps excavations. In fact, because it is forbidden to dig on the Temple Mount itself, this area immediately south of the mount offers important archaeology to help unpack the history of the Temple Mount during the first century. Excavation of this area began in 1968 by Benjamin Mazar and continued for ten years. Since the 1990s, archeological excavations have progressed under Ronny Reich. In fact, the recent discovery of the First-Temple period Ophel (mentioned in 2 Chronicles 27:3; 33:14) has been opened to the public. The 200-foot wide flight of stairs represents both original and restored steps from the Second Temple period. Worshipers would enter the Temple from these steps, after a customary cleansing in the nearby ritual baths, or *mikvot*. At the top of the Southern Steps, at the far east of the stairway, stands a triple gate—today closed with stones. This gate served as a primary entrance into a subterranean tunnel that ascended into the Temple Courts. At the far west of the broad staircase, a double gate stood—today only a portion of this gate and its lintel can be seen. This gate represented an exit, and the stairway below it, with their alternating wide and narrow steps—offered a place for teaching, for visiting, or for a simple descent.

City of David

Archaeological park with remains of the ancient core of Jerusalem, dated to the Canaanite and first temple periods. The 3,000 years old city, established by King David, is located on a low ridge above the Gihon spring, southeast of the temple mount. The location of this ancient core of Jerusalem, and the earlier Canaanite city of the Jebusites, was forgotten after three millennia of the successive constructions and destructions.

Recent excavations have revealed sections of the palace, fortifications, water supply and other interesting remains from the Canaanite and Israelite cities. This archaeological park is one of Israel's most important historical landmarks, a must-see site for all Bible-Walkers.

Bronze Age - Canaanite period (3150-1200 B.C.) = The ridge of the City of David was first settled during the end of the Chalcolithic period, some 5,000 years ago. The caves above the Gihon spring, on the eastern hillside, were in use as living quarters during that time or later during the Early Bronze age.

In the 18th Century B.C., a fortified city - named Salem or Shalem - was constructed on the ridge above the spring. A reference to Salem, probably a wealthy and influential city, was noted in the meeting of Abraham with the King of Salem (*Genesis 14, 18-20*): "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all".

Melchizedek is not only a king, he is a priest of a high God - Shalem. This was a Canaanite God of sunset, also called Salim or Salem. The center of worship was Jerusalem, probably on the high place above the city - the hill of Moriah, the Temple mount. The holiness of the site of Canaanite worship was transformed later to the Holiest site for the Israelites, a pattern known from other Holy places such as Shiloh.

The city is also referenced in several Egyptian sources, starting in the 19th Century (12th Dynasty) enemy-curse clay tablets (execration texts) as Ushamam or Ushalmam. The city is mentioned as "Urasalim" in the Tell el-Amarna letters, a 14th century BC Egyptian archive of clay tablets.

During that time, 18th Century B.C., the Canaanites built a massive tower above the Gihon spring, since it was the main source of water supply in the area. The tower was connected to the fortified city above the spring, allowing exclusive access to the water during siege, while channeling the waters to the fields of the valley of Kidron during peaceful times.

The water complex was one of the advanced engineering projects in that time, as the Canaanites cut long tunnels into the rock for supporting the access to the spring, creating a large reservoir pool, and channeling the waters outside to the valley.

The walls of the city were massive, as recently unearthed in the excavations of the Gihon spring tower. These fortifications made the Canaanite city very well protected.

Israelite period (1200-586 B.C.) = Joshua headed the army of the Israelites during the conquest of Canaan, and defeated the King of Shalem (named here as Jerusalem) and his coalition of five Canaanite kings in ~1250 B.C. (*Joshua 10*): "Now it came to pass, when Adonizedec king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai... Therefore the five kings... gathered themselves together, and went up... Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly... And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies".

Joshua chased the 5 Amorite kings down to Azekah. The Israelites slew the Amorites, and God casted great hailstones which destroyed them (*Joshua 10 10-11*). Although the king of Shalem was defeated, the Canaanite city stood against the Israelites. During the following 200 years of the Judges, the Israelites could not conquer the Canaanite city due to these walls and water supply complex. As per the Bible (1 Judges 21): "And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem".

King David (~1000 B.C.) = King David finally captured the city at about 1,000 BC. David's soldiers entered into the city of the Jebusites through the gutter, probably the tunnel of the Gihon spring (2 *Samuel 5 6-9*): "And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither. Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David. And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites. , and the lame and the blind that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house. So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward."

David rebuilt the Canaanite city on the ridge west of the Kidron valley, above the spring. Recent excavations in this area have revealed probable traces of the ruins of the royal palace area. The excavations unearthed may interesting findings, such as bullae (clay seals) bearing names of officials of the Judean Kingdom, which are named in the Bible.

First temple period - Judea Kingdom (10th-8th Century B.C.) = The Gihon spring is mentioned in the event of the anointment of David's son, Solomon, in parallel to the attempt of Adonijah's to replace David. The spring is located under the palace, as David commands Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet to "bring him down" to the spring (1 *Kings 1:33-34, 39*): "The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon... And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon."

King Solomon enlarged the city of Jerusalem. He built the first temple on top of Mt. Moriah, which is located to the north of the city of David. Solomon built the royal palace in the Ophel, between the temple mount and the city of David, and connected these two sections within the new walls. The city

expanded to the north and west. After his times, the united Israelite kingdom split, while Jerusalem became the capital city of the southern kingdom of Judea.

Assyrians (8th C B.C.) = The Assyrian empire conquered Syria and the North of Israel during the reign of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III. The Assyrian king, probably named in the Bible as "Shalman", invaded to Syria and the northern part of Israel in the first Assyrian intrusion (841 B.C.). This conquest continued in a second intrusion (738) by the great Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III.

Pekah son of Remaliah, the king of the Northern Israelite kingdom, tried to block the Assyrians. He attempted to create a coalition with the Rezin king of Aram-Syria and with the Judean Kingdom. However, King Ahaz (the grandson of Uzziah) refused to join them. Pekah then tried to replace Ahaz with the son of Tabeal, and attacked Judah (*Isaiah 7 6*).

This attack encouraged the Adomites and the Philistines to attack Judah (*2 Chronicles 28 18*). Ahaz was under pressure from all fronts, and called the Assyrians for help, although prophet Isaiah warned against the move (*Isaiah 7 4*).

The Assyrians quickly came to the help of Judah: In 734BC was an intrusion to the North of Israel by the Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser III. The Assyrians first captured the coastal cities until Gaza, subduing the Philistines. At a second intrusion (732) they captured some of the cities of the Northern Israelite Kingdom (as per *2 Kings 15: 29*): "In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and took ... Galilee...and carried them captive to Assyria".

The Egyptians encouraged the people in the occupied territories of the Assyrians to revolt following the death of Tiglath-Pileser III. Hoshea, king of Northern Israel, joined this mutiny, but made a fatal mistake. This time the Assyrians crushed the remaining territories of the Northern Kingdom. The intrusions of kings Shalmaneser V and Sargon II in 724-712 ended the Northern Kingdom (*2 Kings 17: 5-6*). Refugees from the Northern Kingdom settled in Jerusalem. The South Kingdom of Judah managed to survive this onslaught by teaming up with the Assyrians, but not for long.

King Hezekiah = After the death of the Assyrian king Sargon II (705 B.C.), king Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, mutinied against the Assyrians, joining other cities in the area who attempted to free themselves from the Assyrian conquest. Anticipating the coming Assyrian intrusion, he fortified Jerusalem and the major cities.

Hezekiah (King 716-687 B.C.) prepared Judea on the eve of the Assyrian intrusion. Among other works, he constructed a tunnel from the Gihon spring to the Shiloam (Siloam) pool, in order to prevent the waters of the Gihon to be used by the enemy.

(*2 Chronicles 32 2-4*): "And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him. So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?". The tunnel brought the spring waters

into the walls of the city of David, rather than flowing out to the Kidron (*2 Chronicles 32 30*): "This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David".

The tunnel project is also summarized in Hezekiah's Biblical "obituary" (*2 Kings 20 20*): "And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?".

The Assyrian army came in 701, leaded by Sennacherib, son of Sargon II (*2 Chronicles 31 1*): "After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself". According to an Assyrian clay tablet, Sennacherib conquered 46 cities in Judea.

However, Jerusalem was spared from destruction and the Assyrians retreated (*2 Chronicles 31 21-22*): "And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword. Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side".

Babylonian conquest (604-538 B.C.) = The Assyrian empire fell in 610 B.C., and was replaced by the Babylonians. During the empire switchover, the Judean King Josiah (628 to 609BC) seized the moment and expanded the Kingdom (*2 Kings 23*). This was the greatest times for the Judean Kingdom, which lasted for a short time, since Josiah was killed in a battle at Megiddo. The Babylonians, headed by Nebuchadnezzar, conquered the coastal cities in 604 BC (*2 Kings 24 7*), and later destroyed Judea and Jerusalem in 587. The temple and Jerusalem were destroyed, and some of the population were exiled.

Persian conquest (538 - 332 B.C.) = The Persians defeated the Babylonians (539BC), and King Cyrus "the Great" allowed the Judean exiles to return back to Israel (Zion) and rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. In 444 B.C., Nehemiah the Governor rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, including the ruined walls of the city of David. Sections of his walls were excavated on the eastern side of the ridge. Nehemiah's night tour around the ruined city of David are illustrated on the right, and detailed in these Biblical verses (*Nehemiah 2 13-15*): "And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned".

From the Hellenistic period to the Ottoman period = According to the Roman period Historian Josephus Flavius, this area became a fortified compound during the Hellenistic period. Antiochus IV, ruler of the Seleucid Empire, constructed a fortress ("Aqra"), following his sack of the city in 168 B.C. His deeds, and the fortified compound, played significant roles in the struggle of the Jewish freedom-fighters - the Hasmoneans. Although the majority of the city and the temple were liberated by the Jewish fighters in 164 B.C., as celebrated each year in Hanukah, the compound continued to be held by their enemies until

Simon Maccabeus besieged and captured the fortress (141). According to Josephus, the location of the Aqra was in the entire area of the lower city ("City of David"), although there are scholars who locate the Aqra at different areas of the city.

Pool of Siloam

The Pool of Siloam was located on the south side of the Lower City, the City of David in the Tyropoeon Valley. It was a man-made reservoir and the only permanent water source for the city of Jerusalem in this period, being fed by the waters of the Gihon Spring diverted through Hezekiah's Tunnel, built in the 8th century BC.. The Pool of Siloam is clearly distinguishable in the Second Temple model of Jerusalem. During the time of Jesus the poor people, and sick people would come here to bathe. It is very interesting that Jesus chose this place to send the blind man (John 9:6-7), for it was recorded among the writings of the oral law that this was the Messiah's pool. The Old Testament clearly identifies the Messiah as the "sent one" numerous times, and Siloam is the same word in the Hebrew and the English transliteration is the word apostle, or missionary. The expression "pool of Siloam (which is translated, Sent)" (John 9:7) is found three times in Scripture-Neh. 3:15, "Pool of Shelah"; Isa 8:6, "waters of Shiloah"; John 9:7, "pool of Siloam." If we compare Neh 3:15 with 12:37, we find that the Pool of Shelah, the stairs that go down from the city of David (southern portion of the Temple mount), and the king's garden were in close proximity. Josephus frequently mentions Siloam, placing it at the termination of the Tyropoeon Valley (Wars 5.4.1). The blind man (John 9:7) sent by Jesus to wash at the pool of Siloam seems to indicate that it was near the Temple. It was from Siloam that water was brought in a golden vessel to the Temple during the feast of Tabernacles; our Lord probably pointed to it when He stood in the Temple and cried, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink" (7:37).